

VZCZCXRO8440
RR RUEHIK RUEHPOD RUEHYG
DE RUEHTL #0519/01 2250717
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 130717Z AUG 07
FM AMEMBASSY TALLINN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0065
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TALLINN 000519

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
FOR EUR/NB -- KATHERINE GARRY

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EINV](#) [EN](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEEING WITH NEW FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE CHAIR

¶1. (U) Summary. On August 8, the Ambassador hosted a luncheon with Sven Mikser, Member of Parliament (MP) and the new Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC). The two discussed Estonia and the European Union's relations with Russia, Estonia's contributions in the global war on terror, and ideas on how to strengthen U.S.-Estonian relations. Mikser reiterated Estonia's appreciation for U.S. support during its recent crisis with Russia, and reaffirmed the trends we have seen in Parliament: firm support for Afghanistan and division over Iraq. Mikser believes U.S.-Estonian relations are strong, and is receptive to new ideas to strengthen the relationship. End Summary.

Russia

¶2. (SBU) From the outset of the Ambassador's August 8 introductory meeting with Sven Mikser, Social Democrat MP, FAC Chairman, and a former Estonian Defense Minister (2002-2003), the discussion focused on Russia. Mikser said that since his election to the post in April, relations with Russia have dominated his Committee's activities and attention. Mikser opined that Moscow's "over-reaction" to the GOE's movement of the World War II-era Bronze Soldier monument revealed the true colors of the Putin regime to a wider European audience. While this has generated more discussion on a common EU stance vis--vis Russia, Mikser admitted that he has personally seen very little substance. Russia's strategy to divide EU members continues, and is highly effective when Russian gas and oil are involved. "During the German EU Presidency, Berlin said many times that we need a common EU energy security policy," Mikser said, "but the Germans continue to push the Nordstream pipeline to guarantee their share of Russian gas." Mikser repeated the concerns of energy experts who believe Russia's lack of investment in upstream infrastructure will eventually lead to a drop in Russian energy production. Mikser believes Berlin most likely shares this fear, which, in his opinion, would explain Chancellor Merkel's continued support for Nordstream as an insurance policy to safeguard Germany's share of Russian gas in case of a drop in future production.

Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo

¶3. (SBU) When Parliament reconvenes in the second week of September, all three of Estonia's foreign mission mandates (e.g., Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo) will need to be renewed to avoid termination by the end of 2007. Mikser did not foresee any difficulty renewing the Afghanistan and Kosovo missions, but admitted that Iraq would be a contentious vote. Center Party, the largest opposition party in Parliament, and the People's Union Party have

already indicated that they will furiously oppose the Iraq mission mandate renewal when it comes to a vote. However, Mikser said that as long as there is another United Nations Security Council Resolution on Iraq, he believes the mission will be renewed. While he admitted that the Social Democrats have been divided over Estonian troops serving in Iraq, he felt the majority of Social Democrat MPs would honor its coalition government agreement, ensuring the GOE has the votes it needs.

U.S.-Estonian Relations

¶4. (SBU) Both the Ambassador and Mikser agreed that U.S.-Estonian relations remain strong and healthy. Mikser said that U.S. support during Estonia's crisis with Russia was particularly important and deeply appreciated by the Estonian public which felt besieged. In particular, he said the visit by Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves to the White House in June could not have come at a better time. The Ambassador said that Estonia's crisis (e.g., economic sanctions by Russia, cyber attacks, its embassy in Moscow under siege) has raised the country's profile with the U.S. public. The Ambassador suggested that the GOE use this higher profile as an opportunity to promote its advances in information technology, good governance, market reforms, and business savvy within the U.S. to lure more U.S. investment in Estonia and promote Estonian business opportunities in the U.S. Mikser was highly receptive to this suggestion, and invited him to address the entire FAC later in the fall to further explore how to strengthen and deepen U.S.-Estonian relations.

¶5. (SBU) Comment. Several of the issues discussed at this meeting will be among the most pressing foreign policy

TALLINN 00000519 002 OF 002

matters that Parliament will wrestle with this fall. Mikser's assessment of the prospects for renewal of Estonia's mission mandates reaffirmed the trends we have seen in Parliament: firm support for Afghanistan and division over Iraq.

PHILLIPS